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THE CATHOLIC LAYMAN.

Glóir do Dha an rna hárouib, ager ríodáin an an dealam deagtoil do na dáoinib.

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THE PRIDE OF PROTESTANTS.

NOTHING is more common among Roman Catholic writers than to condemn "Protestantism" in the gross, as if it were always and indisputably the mere result of *pride and ignorance*, even where more degrading *vices* were not at the root of it. Such ideas have been so frequently and so confidently put forth by eminent and popular Romish writers, that it is no wonder they are often, by common and half-educated minds, taken for granted as truisms, no more requiring proof than any other self-evident proposition.

The Most Rev. Dr. Cullen, whose new Pastoral we have made some observations on in another column, even when professing the meekest spirit of charity, does not fail to foster and perpetuate these truly *uncharitable* opinions, and deems it quite enough to reiterate the old assertion (without offering any proof of it), that it is "*pride, degrading immorality, and ignorance*, which alone dispose a Catholic to renounce his faith. May such," he adds, "*always be objects of our abhorrence.*"

We have but little doubt that not a few sincere and devout Roman Catholics have been, from time to time, deterred from reading our pages, and from religious inquiry in general, by the unfavourable opinions which they have thus been led to entertain of the principles of our reformed Church and the character of her members. Roman Catholics are thus persuaded that all Protestants are proud and stiff-necked, wanting in humility, reverence, and faith; that they reject all authority but that of their own private judgment; and that while they profess to reverence the Word of God as their rule of faith, yet, in reality, the only rule they will submit to is that of human reason, with its endless argumentations, and its conflicting, and, too often, false and pernicious conclusions.

If Protestants assure them that they entirely mistake and misrepresent them, they endeavour to establish their charges by such arguments as the following:—

Is it not written in Scripture that we must receive the kingdom of heaven as a *little child*, or we shall in nowise enter therein? Does the Bible, to which you always appeal, speak a different language from the Church on this matter? No; it uniformly condemns unbelieving doubts and cavils; it speaks with the language of authority; it claims obedience, and it commends and enjoins a child-like, unquestioning, unarguing faith. But you, Protestants, will not believe unless you have demonstration; and if you will not believe except when you cannot help believing, in what respect is your faith superior to that of devils, who believe for the like reason? There is no merit in such faith, nor does it deserve the name of faith. We, Catholics, think it a sin against God to argue about doctrines which He requires us to believe and obey, and rebellion against His Church to countenance, or even to listen to, attacks upon her authority. On the other hand, the only thing which you, Protestants, seem to reverence or worship is your own intellect; and it is this very circumstance—this proud and disobedient temper of mind, that most of all indisposes pious Catholics from coming in contact with you or your writings.

We have stated the reasoning usually adopted by Roman Catholics as fairly and forcibly as we could, and we request their attention to our answer.

We agree with them in what they say respecting the duty of reverence and humility, and a child-like faith. We condemn, as much as they do, the principle of exalting human reason above the Word of God, as well as that of being

satisfied with nothing short of demonstration. We are aware that private judgment has often erred, and grievously misled those who trusted to its unaided efforts, leading them to make shipwreck of their faith, and that among Roman Catholics as well as Protestants. But the question still remains—how am I to evince my faith or humility? Is it by abandoning altogether the use of that reason which God has given me? Is it by receiving a system as God's truth without having any rational grounds for believing that it does, indeed, come from Him?

We cannot bring ourselves to think that our Roman Catholic brethren will answer these questions in the affirmative. Such a principle would prove too much. It would justify Mahomedans in adhering blindly to their religion, and in refusing to argue the question of its truth with Christians; for they, too, might say, we will have faith, not reason, for our guide; and we regard your objections to our creed as proceeding from a profane and presumptuous spirit, and therefore we close our ears against them.

Our blessed Lord and his Apostles, at the first promulgation of Christianity, proceeded on a principle very different from this. "If I had not done among them," saith Christ, "the works which none other man did, they had not had sin." And again—"Believe me for the very work's sake." St. Paul also says—"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." And St. John—"Beloved, believe not every spirit; but try the spirits, whether they be of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." No doubt, we are called on to receive the kingdom of God as little children; but, then, the Apostle Paul exhorts us, saying, "Brethren, be not children in *understanding*: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in *understanding* be men."

A child is ready to believe everything that his father tells him, and so is a Christian, also; but, then, he must be satisfied that it is his heavenly Father that speaks to him, and not some one else, falsely claiming to speak with His authority. We humbly and undoubtingly submit our own understanding to God's will and His truth; but we deem it degrading and dangerous to ourselves, and dishonouring to God, not to seek to obtain as much evidence as He has put within our reach, that that which demands our assent is His truth; or not to have recourse to every available means to enable us rightly to understand it.

A blind, unreasoning assent to what we have been taught is not faith, but credulity. An indolent, ill-informed faith of this sort will prove, in the hour of trial, to be as weak as it is irrational; and we appeal to those who are acquainted with the religious condition of Europe, whether absolute infidelity is not widely prevalent in those communities which profess to believe just as the infallible Church of Rome directs them. We dispute the existence of any such supreme and infallible authority as inherent in the Roman Church, and it is vain for her members to decline the discussion of her pretensions to the possession and exercise of such authority. But though we reject this authority because we can prove from the Bible and ecclesiastical history that it is unscriptural, and was unknown to the primitive Church, yet we are far from rejecting all authority.

The authority of the creeds and liturgies and the decrees of general councils of the ancient Church; that of the various apologetic, dogmatic, expository, and homiletic writings of the Fathers, and of the authorized formularies of our own branch of the Church catholic, are authorities of very great weight, and entitled to our deepest respect. But they possess a moral authority, not a despotic one; an authority which guides our judgment, not supercedes it; and which, by at once directing us to the word of God, and helping us to understand its meaning, saves us from the extravagancies incident to private judgment on the one hand, and from a blind and slavish submission to the mere dicta of a priesthood on the other.

Surely, the distinction is a simple and palpable one, intelligible to the most ordinary capacity.

Let us take an every-day instance, illustrative of the difference between the two modes of proceeding. A thoughtful member of the Church of England feels a difficulty, we will suppose, about some doctrine which he has heard, or some text of Scripture which he has read, and desires to be satisfied about it; will he refuse all assistance from other minds, and set to work to settle the point by his own unaided reason, wholly disregarding what other

men, no matter how learned or wise, have thought or think upon the subject? This would, indeed, be arrogant and presumptuous, and any intelligent Protestant would at once tell you he must be a silly, as well as a proud man, who would act in such an unreasonable way.

The course a wise Protestant would take in such a case would be quite the reverse. While he would freely and fearlessly exercise the faculties of his own mind in trying to elucidate the meaning he was seeking, or to get over the difficulty which had embarrassed him; instead of trusting solely to his own reason, he would most anxiously seek to get all the aid he could from the minds of other men who had before him considered or studied the subject; and the more learned and highly educated such a Protestant was, the more extensively and laboriously would he consult all the authorities within his reach, whether living or dead, and compare, weigh, and contrast, what they and each of them had said or written upon the matter.

We are, as our readers know, zealous advocates of the fullest intellectual freedom, and yet, we think, there is no greater privilege than to have a facility for consulting wise, well-instructed men's thoughts and reasonings upon subjects which have embarrassed ourselves, and where needful discussing with them which of several views taken of the same matters by able men is the correct one. Next to having such a power, we esteem it the greatest privilege on earth to have ready access to the works of the most learned and greatest men of all ages and nations, and to have leisure and preliminary knowledge enough to enable us to trace the current of their thoughts in the works they have bequeathed to the world, and see how such things appeared to their minds, and what they have recorded as the result of their labours in the same field of enquiry. In such a spirit, it is truly a delightful exercise of Protestant freedom to consult, for instance, the noble commentaries written in early times on the Holy Scriptures by such fathers of the Church as St. Chrysostom and St. Augustine; and were we to shut our eyes, or refuse to listen, not with slavish subservience, but with all due reverence and interest, to what such men have recorded on any subject, we think we should be justly considered theological coxcombs, rather than a fair specimen of wise and intelligent Protestants.

But after such an enlightened Protestant as we have supposed had consulted the greatest writers whom he could conveniently get access to, and listened gladly to all that the wisest and best among his living pastors and associates could furnish him with, he would not only feel at liberty, but unavoidably constrained, to use the reason and faculties which God had given him to draw the best conclusion he could from all that he had learned as well as from all that he had thought; and he would feel so much the more or less satisfied about the result just in proportion as he found that others whose learning and judgment he had found reason to respect and admire, had or had not arrived at the same conclusions with himself. We are satisfied that there is no mental training which so practically leads men to be modest and humble, as the habit of extensive and intelligent inquiry into what other men have thought and think upon the matters in which we feel an interest; and the influence and legitimate authority of wise and learned men is never greater than on the mind of a man who, instead of hastily and blindly jumping to a conclusion, freely and fearlessly hears all sides, and patiently acquaints himself with everything which has been said by others before him, before he decidedly makes up his own ultimate judgment upon the subject.

Private judgment thus exercised, with due patience, candour, and earnestness, is therefore, so far from being connected with either pride or ignorance, intimately associated with industry and learning, as well as quite consistent with modesty and reverence towards those wiser and better than ourselves; in short, it is only the abuse of this noble exercise of our faculties that is open to just condemnation.

We admit with regret that individual Protestants are, in the present day, sometimes as proud and self-conceited as individual members of the Church of Rome are sometimes pusillanimous and servile, and ignorant besides; but it is as untrue that an enlightened Protestantism *inculcates* pride and self-conceit as that it is based on ignorance or vice. The Reformation had no better friends than the learned men of that age: Erasmus,

Reuchlin, and a multitude of others who never became Protestants, contributed scarcely less to its success than those who were exclusively theologians. The reformers, both in England and abroad, were as learned persons as that age, or any other age, produced; men who fathomed the deepest ecclesiastical studies of their time. In the next century, Jeremy Taylor and Ussher, and after them Stillingfleet and Barrow, followed the same method with equal success, and were inferior to none in learning, ancient or modern; and we venture to foretell, that if England shall ever lapse again into a taste for medieval practices and opinions, it will not be because mankind have become more learned or more humble, but because they have become too indolent and impatient to tread the laborious paths of sound learning and independent thought, and prefer blindly handing over their minds and consciences to the keeping and guidance of others more bold, and perhaps less scrupulous, than themselves, to the more troublesome and anxious task of exercising spiritual freedom and moral self-government.

DR. CULLEN'S PASTORAL ON THE FESTIVAL OF ST. PATRICK.

We think it a favourable sign of the times when Roman Catholic prelates think it necessary to reason with their flocks, and inculcate kindly feelings towards those who differ with them in matters of religion.

We rejoice to see some symptoms of this better state of things in the Most Reverend Dr. Cullen's last Pastoral, which was ordered to be read in each chapel or church of the diocese of Dublin on Passion Sunday in March last; and though we think there are various passages which savour rather too much of that bitterness of ancient rancour against their Protestant fellow-countrymen which it has so long been the aim of the Roman Catholic priesthood to perpetuate in Ireland, yet on the whole we are glad to recognize passages of which we can cordially approve, and sentiments which we hope henceforth to see oftener.

Dr. Cullen, acknowledging that "the *religieuses unions* have ceased" (p. 26) against his party in Ireland, and animadverting very justly on the harsh manner in which some ministers of Protestantism inveigh against the (R.) Catholic religion, but which he admits that a large number of "enlightened, liberal-minded Protestants highly condemn," thus proceeds, p. 27:—

"Jesus Christ has told us, that charity is to be in every age the characteristic mark of His disciples. Is there any trace of this holy virtue in the conduct of those preachers, whose only study it is to excite feelings of rancour and hatred in the bosoms of their hearers? Would it not appear that they are intent on banishing charity from the world? Do they thus show that they are not the disciples of our meek and charitable Saviour, Jesus Christ? How are we, dearly beloved, to meet this conduct? By praying most fervently for the conversion of the misguided men who are leading others astray, by returning good for evil, and by a continual practice of charity. We have religious doctrines of our own to teach or to learn; we have duties to perform; we have our own defects to correct. Let us leave those who, forgetting themselves, only think of us, to the judgment and the mercy of God."

We heartily wish that these excellent admonitions were echoed by every pulpit and repeated in every publication throughout the length and breadth of our distracted country. If such truly Christian advice was practically followed, and honestly carried out, how soon would the whole aspect of society be remodelled, and the national character redeemed and elevated. Fellow-countrymen might still differ in matters of opinion, or as to religious ceremonies and observances; but it would not longer be possible for fellow-countrymen worshipping the same benignant Deity, breathing the same atmosphere, and protected by the same laws, to hate or to vilify, to persecute or do injury one to the other. We respond most warmly to Dr. Cullen's exhortation "to pray most fervently for the conversion of those who are leading men astray, to return good for evil, and for a continual practice of charity."

We think, however, that Dr. Cullen scarcely practises the charity he so touchingly preaches, when, in the very next page, 28, he denounces the mass of scripture readers and other spiritual agents at present at work in Ireland, under the guidance of earnest individuals and various religious societies, as "ignorant" and "degraded" characters, who "talk of the Bible, but do not read it or understand it, and who in quoting a few distorted texts against our doctrines, are only blaspheming what they do not know: men who, in the hour of distress, renounced their religion, or were driven into apostasy by intemperance, immorality, and degrading vices, and, like the fallen angels, seek to have companions of their disgrace." "To reason with such agents would be useless. They are to be avoided, as if infected with the plague." "There are now in this country thousands of hired agents of proselytism, who make it their occupation to lay in wait for the poor, invade their houses, and try to sap the foundations of their faith."

Now, it may be true, for all we know to the contrary, that some few unworthy men, actuated by unholy motives and whose moral characters or religious acquirements render them unfit for the duties they have undertaken, may have from time to time intruded themselves into the office of scriptural teachers or readers, by, for a

time, deceiving and imposing on the well meaning and excellent men who, we earnestly believe, are using the best agency within their power or procurement for the spread of gospel truths and religious education through the country; but we solemnly protest against the *unavoidable* assertion, that any considerable number of the *thousand* agents of proselytism (as Dr. Cullen calls them) now in Ireland can fairly be characterized in the colours in which he has painted them. We believe that a vast majority of the spiritual agents employed by Protestants of any sect throughout this country are men of temperate and moral habits, who both understand the Bible, and are zealously anxious to propagate what they and their employers believe to be the true religion which the Lord Jesus died on the cross to establish; and *cure* we are that not a single agent has ever been continued or is at present employed in such a work whose character is known by those who employ him to be tainted with any of the disgraceful vices which Dr. Cullen has endeavoured to imprint upon the whole body of Protestant missionary agents in Ireland. It is, however, very difficult for men of Dr. Cullen's habits of thought and action to avoid the temptation of trying to confound all his opponents in one indiscriminate censure, and to excite the passions and prejudices of his followers, even when preaching the holiest precepts of that religious charity which he admits that "Jesus Christ has taught us is in every age to be the characteristic mark of his disciples."

We must now proceed to notice the argumentative parts of Dr. Cullen's Pastoral. Before doing so, however, we would venture to suggest a word of caution to those respected dignitaries, clergymen, and lay members of the Protestant establishment under whose sanction missionary agents are at present in operation in this country; and we do so the more freely, because, while humbly and earnestly labouring in the same cause of propagating what we earnestly believe to be religious truth, we are ourselves wholly unconnected with any of the societies who have the selection, employment, or superintendence of such agents in any part of Ireland.

Together, the sending additional spiritual agency to any locality, however urgently it may appear to them or others to be in need of it, than to send forth men in whose characters and intelligence they cannot feel well-founded confidence. We feel sure that more harm than good has sometimes been done by the employment of those whose spiritual character and acquirements are not suited to the task (at all times a delicate and difficult one) of attempting to alter or improve the modes of thought and habits of conduct of their fellow-countrymen. However inadequate to the exigencies of the case a small number of tried and unexceptionable men may be, we earnestly believe that a handful of such in each county would do more real and permanent good than a similar number of half-qualified agents in every parish. The persons to be influenced in Ireland are sharp-witted, and quick at detecting defects, which others are not slow at publishing and exaggerating, and thus the influence of the best may be marred, if not neutralized, by the indiscretion and intemperance, or the sloth and unspiritual tone of others, with whom they are associated in name, though, perhaps, wholly unconnected in any other way. We speak not, of course, of such degraded characters as Dr. Cullen describes; but we think that men may be wholly untainted by the grosser vices of intemperance or immorality, and yet be far from duly qualified to perform the solemn functions of controversial teachers or spiritual agents, and be wholly unfit safely to be held out to the world as the acknowledged representatives of Protestantism in places where the majority of the people are professedly Roman Catholics. We now come to consider the assertions and arguments of Dr. Cullen.

Availing himself of the topics connected with the Apostle of Ireland, whose memory every Irishman acquainted with his history cannot fail to respect, Dr. Cullen endeavours to appropriate all the glory of St. Patrick to the Church of Rome, by making a number of assertions, each of which requires historical proof. Whether he has proved any of them we shall venture to consider presently.

1st, He says, that "all antiquity attests that St. Patrick proceeded to Rome to obtain jurisdiction from the Holy See before he entered on his mission, being persuaded that his labours would be cursed with sterility if they were not undertaken with the blessing of Christ's Vicar on earth, and that he would enjoy no spiritual authority unless he derived it from the Centre of Unity" (p. 19). "As the Apostle of the Gentiles went to Jerusalem to confer with St. Peter, lest he should run in vain, so did St. Patrick hasten to Rome to venerate the successor of the Fisherman, and to receive his commission from him" (p. 20). So our forefathers, having received the faith through St. Patrick from the Apostolic source, they were always distinguished by an undying attachment and devotion to the centre of unity, the chair of St. Peter" (p. 22).

2ndly, He asserts that the faith planted here by St. Patrick was identically the same as that now professed at the present day, after fourteen centuries, by the (Roman) Catholic Church in Ireland (p. 9), more especially as regards the cardinal point of belief in the supremacy of the Holy See (p. 19).

These two propositions (with a third, which Dr. Cullen implies rather than asserts—viz., that the doctrines of the Church of Rome in the fifth century were identical with those of the Church of Rome in the nineteenth century) form the basis of his argument in his present Pastoral, and we shall proceed to consider how far the proofs he has adduced in support of them establish their truth. Upon the historical truth or falsehood of these propositions the whole weight of Dr. Cullen's argument must depend. And surely these are points about which men ought to be able to speak and write calmly, and examine fairly, nay, even to differ widely, without any bitterness or breach of charity. At any rate, the only way of arriving at the truth is by calm and honest inquiry, and listening impartially to the reasons and evidence brought forward on both sides, by any one who can reasonably be supposed to understand the subject in question. We shall seriously endeavour not to break the rules of candour and Christian charity in anything we are about to write, and we trust that any who may be induced to follow us or Dr. Cullen in the discussion, whether orally or in writing, will take care to do so in the same spirit.

The first point we shall discuss is the question whether St. Patrick was sent to Ireland by, or had a commission from, Rome to preach the Gospel in Ireland. This is a simple matter of fact to be decided by historical evidence, if it exists, and if not, by inferences to be reasonably deduced from any authentic documents which do exist. It is not with us, indeed, a matter of any material importance, unless it be taken for granted that the doctrines held at Rome in the year 432 contained, in addition to those of the ancient creeds, the twelve additional articles of faith promulgated in the year 1564, in the Creed of Pope Pius IV.; which we are convinced, and think we are able to prove, they did not. Did the Roman Catholic Church now hold only the articles of faith which they can prove to have been universally held in the Church in the year 432, we should have no great disposition to debate the question whether St. Patrick was sent to Ireland by Pope Celestine, or whether he undertook the mission independently of the authority of Rome, as we sincerely believe to have been the case.

Suppose, however, that St. Patrick was sent by Rome, it would not follow that those he baptized were subject to the Church which sent him; for, if such an argument were of any weight, then all Churches, and Rome among them, would be subject to the Church of Jerusalem, for all the Apostles came forth from her. She was the mother Church of all Christendom. Therefore, even if the inhabitants of Ireland were baptized by a Roman missionary, it does not follow that they thereby became subject to Rome, but only to Christ.

What, however, is the evidence that St. Patrick was sent from Rome?

We should, of course, naturally look for it either in the works of St. Patrick himself, or in those of the historians of the Church in his time.

Now, in the first place, it is remarkable that his supposed connection with Rome is never alluded to, directly or indirectly, in St. Patrick's own works. We have those works, in the original Latin,* now before us, and in none of them is there any allusion to his supposed mission, except in one of acknowledged spuriousness, called "Charta de Antiquitate Avellonica," which the learned editor, J. L. Villaneuva (himself a Roman Catholic priest), proves in his appendix, p. 294, to be "inaniter S. Patricio adscripta;" while in his preface, p. xxiii., he says of it, "Quæ suspectæ fidei est, et recentiorum ætatem redolet."

This is the more remarkable, because, both in his celebrated "Confession,"^b and in his "Epistle to Coroticus," both of which are indisputably genuine, St. Patrick ascribes his mission exclusively to a heavenly call, without making any mention of either Rome or the Bishop. Is it possible to believe that, if it had been true that St. Patrick (as Dr. Cullen asserts, p. 19) "proceeded to Rome to obtain jurisdiction from the Holy See before he entered on his mission, being persuaded that his labours would be cursed with sterility if they were not undertaken with the blessing of Christ's Vicar on Earth, and that he would enjoy no spiritual authority unless he derived it from (Rome) the centre of unity," yet that St. Patrick should never have said one word about such an important matter, as he must have considered it, according to Dr. Cullen's hypothesis (to say nothing of such a journey, which was in itself no light matter in the year 432), when recording his history and sentiments for the use of posterity?

Next in point of antiquity is, perhaps, the hymn of St. Sechnall (Secundinus), composed in praise of the great Apostle of Ireland, St. Patrick, and which our readers will find at length in our 2nd vol., p. 134. Secundinus died somewhere about A.D. 447.

It is almost equally remarkable that no mention is made in this ancient hymn of St. Patrick having been sent by Pope Celestine, though there are so many places in it where such a mention would have been most appropriate and instructive. He is said to have "received his apostleship from God, even as St. Paul was sent by God

* Sancti Patricii Synodi Canonæ, Opuscula, et Scripturæ quæ supersunt Fragmenta. Villaneuva, Dublini, 1836.
^b Chap. iii., p. 199, &c.